



Washington State Department of Agriculture News Release

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WSDA among agencies and groups celebrating Native Plant Appreciation Week

OLYMPIA – Did you know that Washington is home to more than 3,000 native plant species? Or that more than 360 of them are listed as rare by the state's Natural Heritage Program?

These are just a few of the facts that will be highlighted next week as part of Native Plant Appreciation Week. Gov. Locke dedicated May 24-30 to learning more about the state's amazing diversity of native plant species, ranging from desert plants in eastern Washington to rain forest plants on the Olympic peninsula. The week's events will kick-off at 10 a.m. Monday with informational exhibits and a tour of the ethno-botanical garden at the Coach House at the Capital Museum, 211 W. 21st Ave., in Olympia.

Native Plant Appreciation Week also highlights the work by governmental agencies, non-profit groups and environmental organizations to protect native plant species and restore native plant habitats. The state's natural resource agencies (Agriculture, DNR, Parks, Fish and Wildlife), non-profit agencies (Washington Native Plant Society and Nature Conservancy), the Governor's sustainability office, and a number of cities and counties are participating in the weeklong celebration. The cities of Anacortes, Bellevue, Concrete, Gig Harbor, Issaquah, Lakewood, Maple Valley, Monroe, Olympia, Omak, Pacific, Port Townsend, Sequim, Shoreline, Snohomish, Stanwood, Tumwater and Vancouver have also proclaimed May 24-30 as Native Plant Appreciation Week.

"Native Plant Appreciation Week is intended to encourage citizens to learn more about native plant species and their habitats and how they can protect them," said Bill Brookreson, deputy director of the Washington State Department of Agriculture. "It encourages public involvement in everything from plant walks and visits to our natural areas to active involvement in habitat restoration projects."

The sponsors hope to increase public awareness of the critical role that our native plant ecosystem plays in providing suitable habitat for birds, fish and other animals and in protecting water quality.

Finally, Brookreson said, Native Plant Appreciation Week is intended to educate the public about the tremendous threat invasive pests, such as insects, plant diseases and invasive plant species like *Spartina*, pose to our native plants and ecosystems and the work that public agencies and private groups are doing to combat that threat.

There are numerous plant walks, talks and other opportunities to learn and get involved with our state's native plants. They are listed on the Native Plant Appreciation Week Web site at www.wnps.org.

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